UNESCO-IUCN Monitoring Mission to
Mount Kenya National Park/Natural Forest
World Heritage Site, Kenya

13-17 January 2003

Executive Summary and Recommendations
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1932, the Mount Kenya forests were declared as Forest Reserve. The National Park was established in 1949 and in 1978 it was designated as a Biosphere Reserve. Mount Kenya National Park and part of the adjacent natural forests in the Forest Reserve were inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1997 for their natural properties. The Mount Kenya National Park/Natural Forest World Heritage Site is considered an outstanding example of ecological processes (criteria ii) and its glacier-clad summits and forested middle slopes are outstanding features of exceptional natural beauty (criteria iii).

The World Heritage Committee and its Bureau have been examining issues of concern over the state of conservation of this site since the year 2000. At its 25th Session held in December 2001 in Helsinki the Committee requested the State Party to invite a monitoring mission to the site and the invitation was received from the State Party in April 2002. The UNESCO-IUCN mission was undertaken from 13 to 17 January 2003 by a team with members from UNESCO and IUCN led by Professor Eric Edroma.

The prime objective of the mission was to draw up a report on the state of conservation of the Mount Kenya World Heritage site. A second objective of the mission was to make proposals for future developments at the site and for networking between mountain World Heritage sites in eastern Africa using an Italian Funds-in-Trust contribution to UNESCO for an "African Network for Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Development of Mountain World Heritage sites".

The mission team met with relevant national, regional and local authorities involved in the management of the site, as well as with other stakeholders whose work is related to the World Heritage Site and its surrounding communities. After one day in Nairobi, the team spent three days travelling to Nyeri, the Park Headquarters near Naro Moru, Nanyuki, Meru and Embu. Site visits were made around the mountain and two members of the team made observation flights over the site. On the final day the team returned to Nairobi for further meetings and a wrap-up session with KWS and other stakeholders.

The State Party has made significant changes to the management of Mount Kenya since 1999 in response to widespread concern on the threats to the ecosystem. In July 2000, the Forest Reserve was gazetted as a National Reserve under the Wildlife Act and the responsibility of KWS. Unfortunately the Forest Reserve was not formally degazetted and this led to a period of confusion and disagreement between KWS and the Forest Department over the legal status and the management responsibilities. Despite considerable work to clarify responsibilities and build cooperation, the situation was by no means resolved at the time of the mission. Two weeks before the mission, a new government took office and responsibility for KWS was moved to the Ministry of Environment, already responsible for the forest department. The new Minister of Environment, Dr Newton Kulundu, and the Assistant Minister, Professor Wangari Maathai, have expressed strong commitment to the conservation and rehabilitation of forests in Kenya and since the mission a number of staff changes and other actions have been made to effect this.

KWS, with support from the World Heritage Fund, prepared a new draft management plan 2002-2007 for the site in November 2001. This contained a wealth of information and the management proposals covering the National Park section of the site were largely sound. Although community consultations formed part of the preparation process, the treatment of the forest and of community issues was not satisfactory to the Forest Department or to some other stakeholders. In late 2002 KWS and the Forest Department worked together to redraft a mutually acceptable text. This revised draft was not availed to the mission. From the information given to them, the mission concluded
that further work on the plan and a new round of community consultations are urgently
needed in order to produce a plan that will effectively guide the long-term conservation
of the site. The issues of boundaries and community relations require particular attention.
The mission recommended principles to apply to boundary determination.

In 1999, KWS in cooperation with UNEP made an aerial survey of the destruction of
Mount Kenya, Imenti and Ngare Ndare forest reserves. This mapped settlement of
forest land, cultivation of marijuana, logging of indigenous trees, charcoal production,
cattle grazing and landslides. Although most of the forest damage was outside the World
Heritage site, it nonetheless demonstrated critical threats to the entire ecosystem. After
the National Reserve, was gazetted, KWS acted to prevent these illegal activities and to
apprehend those responsible. A sample follow-up aerial survey in 2002, other monitoring
and the mission observation flights confirmed a much improved situation. Two threats
remain significant. Charcoal burning is still widespread on the fringes of the forest
(outside the World Heritage site itself). The mission recommended further action to stop
this. Marijuana cultivation although greatly reduced in scale was still occurring on a few
sites high in the bamboo forest well within the World Heritage site. Since the mission the
Minister of Environment has publicly ordered action to eliminate this problem. The
improvement in the situation is highly commendable, but further surveillance and
enforcement is required to reduce illegal activities to zero for the long-term.

The Minister has also announced that the non-residential cultivation (NRC) or 'shamba'
system will be phased out in 2004. In many instances, abuse of this agro-forestry system
for renewing plantation forests in the buffer zone has contributed to forest destruction.

A number of electric fences are in operation, under construction or planned to protect
villages and cultivated areas from marauding elephants. While the mission encouraged
judicious use of fencing to reduce conflicts, they stressed the importance of leaving key
migration corridors to prevent genetic isolation of the Mount Kenya elephant stock.

Rural poverty and population growth lead to pressure on the Mount Kenya forests. The
mission was pleased to learn about the many donor and NGO/CBO activities in and
around Mount Kenya and about the coordination and leadership being given by the
Mount Kenya donor/partner forum chaired by UNDP. A number of community
projects have benefited from grants from the GEF-United Nations Foundation
COMPACT initiative, which assigned US$750,000 in support of Mount Kenya World
Heritage site. Rural development in the watersheds to the south and east of the mountain
will benefit from the US$24 million IFAD project. There is potential to continue and
reinforce these initiatives and to encourage appropriate tourism development. The
mission identified networking and development needs and suggested where the proposed
networking among mountain World Heritage sites in East Africa could assist.

In conclusion, the mission considered that the Mount Kenya National Park/Natural
Forest World Heritage Site is now being managed to maintain a satisfactory state of
conservation. The integrity of the site and its World Heritage values under criteria (ii) and
(iii) for natural sites are currently being sustained. However the mission recognized that
many potential threats to the site remain and the long-term survival of the site's integrity
and values will require persistent action by the State Party to combat them.
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The legal status of the National Reserve under KWS management should be rapidly resolved.

2. While commending the recent major reductions achieved, the mission urges the State Party to take vigorous action to eliminate remaining illegal activities in the World Heritage Site itself and in the buffer zone and to prevent such activities at any time in the future. This will require strong law enforcement and the closer involvement of the surrounding communities.

3. The mission recommends that the revised draft Mount Kenya National Park Management Plan be made available for another round of consultations among all the relevant stakeholders before developing the final version. The State Party should in particular ensure that:
   - the local communities are involved in the consultation process and their views are taken into account.
   - the management plan proposes revised boundaries as in the next recommendation.

   The mission emphasises the necessity of completing the Management Plan for the Site as soon as possible and recommends that the State Party cooperates with relevant international partners including the IUCN Eastern Africa Regional Office during this process.

4. The government should submit a nomination for the extension of the World Heritage Site, so that the newly proposed boundary is well defined and includes the natural forest but excludes the plantation zone and the zones around the edge that have been heavily disturbed. The excluded area should be defined as a buffer zone. In order to be consistent, to secure understanding with the communities and to ease administration, the mission recommends that the National Park and National Reserve be regazetted with adjusted boundaries and a nomination for the extension of the biosphere reserve be submitted to UNESCO such that:
   - The boundaries of the World Heritage Site as newly proposed, of the core area of the biosphere reserve and of the National Park coincide.
   - The buffer zones for the World Heritage Site and the biosphere reserve coincide with the National Reserve.
   - A transition area for the biosphere reserve outside the national Reserve is recognized.

5. The mission is concerned about the lack of resources that hinder the Forest Department from making an effective contribution to the protection of the Site. The government should strengthen the financial and human resources and in particular the Forest Department’s staff management capabilities and skills. Clear and effective institutional arrangements should be put in place for the management of the plantation zones and of forest rehabilitation within the national reserve.

6. The mission supports the plans to maintain existing and to build new electric fences as needed to keep the elephants away from the villages and the adjacent crops. However, the mission strongly suggests that corridors are kept open to allow undisturbed migration of elephants from the Mount Kenya ecosystem to
northern rangelands, for example through the Hombe and Sirimon routes, for
the purpose of maintaining genetic diversity in the elephant population.

7. The mission supports the cooperation between KWS and UNEP in carrying out
aerial surveys of the Site. Recognizing that the method that they have developed
provides unusually detailed information on the state of conservation of the
forest, the mission suggests that this could provide a valuable data comparison
for the UNESCO-ESA programme on satellite remote sensing of habitat changes
in natural World Heritage sites. It recommends that KWS establish contact with
UNESCO and the ESA to explore possible inclusion of the Mount Kenya Site in
the programme.

8. KWS should continue regular gathering of scientific information and monitoring
programmes to provide a sound basis for assessing changes in the threats to the
Site. Activities such as the shamba/NRC farming system, grazing, sport fishing,
and water abstraction, that are allowed in the buffer zone, and the tourism
activities in and around the World Heritage Site itself, should be closely and
regularly monitored.

9. KWS, working closely with the Mount Kenya Donor/Partner Forum, should
continue to pool local and international resources together and should develop
collaboration, twinning, networking and partnerships in a continuing effort to
seek solutions to the problems facing the Mount Kenya World Heritage Site and
ecosystem.

10. The mission strongly encourages the government in partnership with KWS,
Forest Department, local and national NGOs and other partners, to formulate
and develop integrated programmes like the forthcoming IFAD funded project
that are aimed at alleviating or eradicating poverty among the communities
around the Mount Kenya Site. Efforts should be focused on providing the
communities with basic education, technical training, and alternatives for
diversifying economic activities, including the modernisation of agriculture and
animal husbandry, and the development of tourism.

11. The mission welcomes the interest of the Italian government in promoting
networking between mountain World Heritage sites and particularly those in East
Africa. The mission suggests that such networking could especially contribute
towards the implementation of the two following recommendations on
community communication and tourism.

12. The mission considers it essential to work towards full participation of the local
communities and other stakeholders in the decision making process for the
management of the World Heritage Site. The mission recommends that KWS
should strengthen and expand its relationships with the local communities and
local authorities around the Site, and should provide its staff with the necessary
training, direction and resources to do so.

13. The integrity of the Site demands that all tourism options are appropriate,
environmentally sustainable, and economically viable, and involve the local
communities. The mission identified a need to help communities appreciate the
high tourist potential of the Site and to promote the growth of a wider range of
successful tourist operations, including community-based tourism, backed up by
appropriate infrastructure and marketing. This requires that the government acts
to facilitate effective information-sharing and partnerships between KWS, the
local communities, tourist operators, sources of finance, the Kenya Tourist Board
and other players.
POCKETS OF MARIJUANA CULTIVATION IN MOUNT KENYA FOREST

SLOW REGENERATION OF NATURAL FOREST IS TAKING PLACE
NATURAL VEGETATION SUCCESSION IN THE MOORLAND OF MOUNT KENYA
Proposed zonation of Mount Kenya
National Park
National Reserve
World Heritage Site

Legend

- TOSAS
- Extents
- National Park
- World Heritage Site
- Zones
- Buffer/Multiple-use
- Conservation (on脚脚)
- Plantation
- Prop. World Heritage
- Transgression zone

Scale: 1:250,000

0 5 10 Kilometers

Kenya Wildlife Service
February 2002